

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 18, 2011

Agenda Item: Proposed Tentative Fishing Regulation Changes for 2012-2015

Division: Fish and Wildlife (Fisheries)

Action Needed: Approval of Proposed (Tentative) Rule

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 45 minutes

Background

The fishing regulation process is based on a four-year cycle. During the first year of every cycle (such as 2012) the FWP embarks on a thorough review of its fishing regulations. As part of this review, staff is directed to propose ways to simplify and standardize regulations, within individual waterbodies, regions or statewide. The public is asked for ideas on how to standardize and simplify, as well as other regulation changes.

Public Involvement Process & Results

A brochure was developed which listed a number of ideas developed by FWP. The public was asked to provide responses to FWP's ideas and also to present their own for regulation changes. The brochure was sent to all license agents in March for distribution to anglers buying their 2011 fishing licenses. In addition, the brochure was posted on the FWP website where comments could be posted. A total of 240 comments were received electronically and an additional 20 were received by surface mail. Helena staff collated and compiled the public responses, and sent them back out to Regional Fisheries Managers for review. Further engagement with the public occurred in June in every Region at open houses, presentations to angler groups, or discussion at Regional Citizens Advisory Committees. During these meetings, FWP asked for feedback on issues that came up during the scoping process and in some cases the public was asked to comment on specific proposed regulation changes. Based on all of this input, FWP staff has developed their list of proposed regulation changes to the FWP Commission for 2012. Once approved by the commission, a formal 30-day public comment period will follow, and the FWP Commission will consider final adoption of the regulation changes on Oct. 13.

Alternatives and Analysis

The proposed regulation changes for 2012 list each proposal individually, and indicate if they are a new regulation or a change or deletion of an existing regulation. A rationale is then provided for each proposed change, along with relevant public opinion. Five regulation proposals are deletions of waterbodies from the exception list, one for conservation purposes of bull trout and the rest because the regulation is no longer needed. Changes are proposed on existing exceptions to another 28 waterbodies; six are primarily to clarify, eight are primarily to simplify, one is to standardize and the remaining 13 are to modify the season or limits. There are also 11 new waterbodies; eight are to create family fishing waters, two are primarily for cutthroat trout conservation purposes, and one is to set a bag limit. In addition, a summary of comments received during the public scoping in March is also provided in a separate attachment. The public suggestions that were not developed into a proposal have been forwarded to Regional staff for consideration at a future time.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

These proposals contain a considerable effort to simplify, clarify and standardize the regulations. Some exceptions are deleted, and the new regulations are designed to be simple to interpret. FWP recommends the adoption of all these proposals for public review and comment.

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt the department's proposed regulation changes to the fishing regulations for the 2012 fishing season.

